

# Prospective Catholics take next step

Angel Jaffary is one step closer to becoming a Catholic.

After more than two years, the 17-year-old beamed with pride as she wrote her name in the Book of Enrollment at the Rite of Election on Sunday, March 5, at St. Joseph's Basilica. The ceremony is where prospective Catholics are presented to the archbishop as ready to be initiated into the Church.

Her mother, Sabrina Jaffray-Barnes, was raised in a Christian household but never had her daughter baptized because she wanted her children to choose their own religion.

"I'm happy for her," said Jaffray-Barnes, a member of the Alliance Church, a Protestant denomination. "This is what she needed, to find a path for herself and make her own decisions."

Since she was 15, Angel Jaffary said she's always had a strong faith and wanted to join the Catholic Church. Angel's grandmother is a devout Catholic.

"I feel at home in my faith," Jaffary said. "My home is Jesus."

Still, she felt nervous as she sat with fellow catechumens – or prospective Catholics – from Sacred Heart Church in Wetaskiwin. She settled down when she walked to the altar to shake hands with Archbishop Richard Smith.

"I felt relief come over me," she said.



Angel Jaffary meets Archbishop Smith during the Rite of Election at St. Joseph's Basilica. Grandin Media file photo

Sacred Heart was one of 14 parishes from outside Edmonton that took part in the Rite of Election on March 5. A total of 73 catechumens participated in the ceremony.

The day before, 16 parishes from Edmonton brought 112 catechumens to celebrate the rite.

Fenton Francis, a catechumen from St. Dominic Savio Parish in Edmonton, said signing his name and meeting the archbishop was a milestone.

“It kind of gave me the sense that (I’m) getting there. It’s a good feeling.”

Francis has been searching for the right faith for himself since emigrating from Jamaica.

He is looking forward to Easter, when he will be formally admitted into the Church. At that time, prospective Catholics will receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.

Francis’ sponsor, Shon Adams, became a Catholic in 2015. After growing up in the Christian Reformed Church, Adams attended charismatic evangelical churches and he was baptized five times.

Adams said the churches he attended “believe that anytime you’ve fallen away you can lose your salvation, so part of getting back is to get rebaptized.

“It was just the way that you did things. When you fall away and struggle with things, there was not a lot of support.”

Adams was curious about Catholicism because he grew up in a household that taught that Catholics weren’t Christian.

“It’s funny – my sister and brother and I grew up that way, and we all married Catholics.”

Adams asked a priest for answers to his questions about reconciliation and the significance of Mary to Catholics. He was directed to the RCIA program. By his third Mass, Adams wanted to join the Catholic Church.

“It just clicked. I’m hearing about Jesus the entire time. That’s it. This is where I’m supposed to be,” he said “This is where I was looking for, for almost 10 years.”

The Rite of Election ceremony impacted him the most.

“You get to see everybody else that’s on the same journey as you, and of course, meeting Archbishop Smith the first time was very impressive,” said Adams.

“What hit me is when I signed my name in the book ... what I was doing publicly for the first time, saying I am accepting this gift that I have been given.”

Adams was not required to be baptized again.

Julliette Moquin, co-ordinator of the Archdiocese Office of Catechesis, said the Rite of Election is a spiritually moving process for the whole parish community.

“When someone new is born into your family for example, there is great joy within the family, and it’s the same for us because they’re joining the family of the Church and for us, that brings great joy,” Moquin said. “It also brings renewal for the Church and reminds us of our own Baptism and our own confirmation of faith, so it’s both a reminder and renewal.”